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**Law and Order Committee approves amendments to the
Navajo Nation Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act of 2012**

Authorizes a referendum on term limits for Council Delegates and President

WINDOW ROCK – On Thursday, the Law and Order Committee approved three important legislations, the first regarding amendments to the Navajo Nation Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act of 2012, and two separate legislations concerning term limits for Council Delegates and the President.

Legislation No. 0101-14 aims to amend the NNSORNA to include provisions to improve the timely apprehension of sex offenders who fail to register or abscond, require registration of sex offenders convicted prior to 2006, and to meet the U.S. Congressional guidelines to safeguard the public from sex offenders through stringent registration requirements.

LOC vice chair Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichii, Steamboat) who sponsored the legislation, said that one of the major challenges of the NNSORNA is addressing absconders, or sex offenders who fail to register with the proper law enforcement agencies.

“We spent a year to almost a year and a half on this issue, and this legislation basically puts in those elements that are missing to address the issues of absconding,” said Delegate Shepherd.

Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety Information Management Section program supervisor Orlando Bowman stated that in addition to offenders absconding, the NNSORNA also takes into account the geographical location of sex offenders on and off the Navajo Nation.

“We want to make sure that sex offenders are properly identified through registering with all agencies in the area, so we closed some loopholes for sex offenders that live, work, or go to school on the reservation,” said Bowman. “For instance, if they live in Gallup and work in Window Rock, they will be required to register on both sides.”

Perry Yazzie, manager of the Navajo Nation Office of Background Investigations, submitted a public comment regarding the sex offender reporting systems.

“Our concern is that the sex offender registration managed by agencies at the federal, regional, state, and local levels do not really coordinate with each other and have a lack of communication between one another,” said Yazzie. “It is important to get comprehensive background histories of offenders that come in to apply for employment [with the Navajo Nation].”

Yazzie said his office had previously researched a known sex offender in several different agencies, but the individual’s name did not surface in some of the reporting systems, only a select few.

Delegate Shepherd suggested that proposed criminal background checks be reviewed by legislative counsel to determine whether it can be added as an amendment to the legislation, or go through separate legislation, or if it is an administrative fix that can be added to the Navajo Nation employment application by the Department of Personnel Management.

“We want this to make this a holistic attempt going forward to make this law as solid as we can,” said Delegate Shepherd. “This [law] protects all Navajo individuals especially young kids at the schools and in their own homes.”

LOC members voted 4-0 to approve Legislation No. 0101-14.

In addition, the LOC considered Legislation No. 0106-14, which seeks to authorize a referendum on the proposed term limits for Council Delegate’s to serve a maximum of two terms, or eight years, within their lifetime. LOC members voted 3-0 to approve Legislation No. 0106-14.

Lastly, LOC members considered Legislation No. 0107-14, which also seeks to authorize a referendum on the proposed term limits for the Navajo Nation President to serve a maximum of two terms, or eight years, within their lifetime. LOC members voted 2-0 to pass Legislation No. 0107-14.

The legislations now move forward to the Naabik’iyátí’ Committee for consideration. Council serves as the final authority for the three legislations.

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